



RESEARCH PAPER

Media Manipulation or Public Diplomacy: Understanding the Role of Local Media in Shaping Pakistan's Foreign Policy

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the role of media in shaping and communicating Pakistan's foreign policy. It explores media coverage, the influence of new media, journalist-politician relations, and the challenges faced in reporting foreign affairs. A qualitative research approach was adopted, involving journalists, editors, policy analysts, and foreign affairs experts as respondents. The findings reveal that media significantly influences public opinion and political discourse, particularly on issues such as Kashmir and Pakistan's stance on Israel. The study also highlights major challenges faced by journalists, including censorship, political pressure, security threats, and limited access to official information, which restrict independent reporting. Moreover, digital and social media have transformed communication by increasing public engagement and accelerating information dissemination, while also contributing to misinformation and polarized narratives. The study concludes that media freedom and professional independence are essential for democratic governance and public trust. It recommends stronger protection for journalists, greater editorial freedom, improved access to information, and responsible use of digital media.

KEYWORDS Media Manipulation, Public Diplomacy, Foreign Policy, Local Media Influence, Digital Media Influence

Introduction

In today's globalized political arena, the media has become a potent tool in shaping public views, determining policymaking and influencing the direction of international relations. Media not only serves as a tool for disseminating information, but it also shapes social perceptions, shapes national narratives and may even influence the government's agenda (Gilboa, 2005). Many contemporary analysts have focused on such issues as the "CNN effect", which shows how intensive and real-time media coverage can force governments to make hasty foreign policy decisions that may have taken a more circumspect course of action in the absence of such coverage (Robinson, 2002). This helps to perpetuate the role of the media as both a catalyst for policy action and an indispensable instrument of public diplomacy, or the means by which states tell their story and communicate national identity and strategic intentions to the world (Nye, 2004).

The role of media is highlighted in the geopolitical context of Pakistan. Foreign policy is a complex issue in Pakistan as different factors exist, ranging from its complex relationship with neighboring India and Afghanistan to the power dynamics in the world. In addition to awareness creation among people, the local media also influences the governance, terrorism, regional cooperation and diplomacy discussions (Muzaffar, et al., 2019; Rizvi, 2016). Political insecurity and the differences in the level of press freedom create a special atmosphere for the country's media with some instances of state

control, some of contestation, and at times a reflection of the political conflict (Muzaffar, et al., 2020)

This has further been enriched by the development of digital technologies that are altering the creation, consumption and challenge of information. In today's digital age, information can be spread quickly, the reach of political communication can be extended, and new insecurities regarding misinformation, agenda setting and narrative management (Seib, 2008) arise, making it all the more essential to reform educational and communication systems to equip citizens with the critical skills needed for the 21st century. It's a more complex format for policymakers and the public to digest at large, given the increasing and more complicated influence of the media on foreign policy.

The media is a great factor in Pakistan's public diplomacy as well. The state is an attempt to sell itself, its values and priorities to the outside world via both traditional and electronic media (Salam, et. al., 2024). This is particularly significant in the context of Pakistan, as it has been facing negative perceptions in the international community, further compounded by persistent socioeconomic pressures that shape its global standing, and has to engage with the rest of the Muslim world constructively (Melissen, 2005). Hence, the broadcaster plays a crucial role in building a positive image of Pakistan in the international arena and their impression of Pakistan's intentions and capacities.

Media and public opinion are two forces that reinforce each other domestically. The media shapes the way in which people think about foreign policy issues and provides a window into the way they think or feel towards foreign policy issues and their political orientations. This circular process can have a profound impact in contexts in which the public opinion for or against foreign policy has the potential to either enhance or undermine foreign policy decisions. Public support for government foreign policy efforts is likely to increase when government and media messages are congruent, and it will diminish when they are not, with the result of undermining the legitimacy of the effort and heightening the potential for public opposition and friction with other nations (Entman, 1993).

In this context, the mass mediums in Pakistan has a dual role as a government instrument to spread policies and as an independent platform for public debate. Due to this duality, it is essential to discuss the impact of media on the foreign policy process in Pakistan, the international events as framed by the media and the perception of both the domestic and international audience. This gives an indispensable understanding of the way Pakistan has approached diplomacy and its overall stance in the world.

The present study, therefore, examines the influence of local media and its influence on the Foreign Policy developments in Pakistan. It does this by providing answers to key issues of State - People - Media relations in a semi-democratic setting. The importance of Pakistan's geopolitics, the structure of media and the conflict between media freedom and state control make it an interesting case to study. The findings of this study can be applied to other states in transition, or even semi-democratic systems in which the media has an increasingly important role in international relations.

Literature Review

The media has long been a key focus of study in international relations particularly in the modern technological age that has transformed the world's communication process. Nowadays, it is recognized that the media is one of the most

significant determinants of the political process, national narratives, public opinion and state behavior. The scholars argue that it is not a simple relationship between the broadcasters and providing information, as the media also helps create perceptions and, in complex and multidimensional ways, can influence the foreign policy decision-making process (Gilboa, 2005).

A basic concept in the study of the connection between media and foreign policy that came to the fore in the 1990s, the “CNN effect” refers to the notion that live coverage of an international crisis can compel a government to take military or diplomatic action. Robinson (2002) noted that coverage of humanitarian crises, on such a scale as was achieved in Somalia or Bosnia, mobilized public opinion and hastened policy decisions which may otherwise have been more gradual. Broadcasting can be a catalyst that can cause states to rethink or change their foreign policy approaches because of the immediacy, global reach and visual impact (Qayyum et al., 2020). It is noted that the CNN effect is merely symptomatic of a larger trend: the media's ability to shape an environment where policymakers must respond to public expectations that are based on the media's constructions, particularly in a democratic or semi-democratic setting where public opinion has a political impact.

In addition to crisis as an influence, the media also serves as an important medium for public diplomacy as a way for the government to influence world opinion, improve national image, and disseminate national foreign policy to the international community. As part of the soft power, public diplomacy is closely dependent on the media to communicate a nation's values, intentions and ideals (Nye, 2004; Bukhari et al., 2024). In this way, the media becomes the link between domestic political spheres and the international community, and states can use it to spread positive stories or to defuse negative ones. Additionally, Melissen (2005) argues that in the modern world, PD is not solely the work of government, but also involves media-organized activities, informal networks of communication and public international discussion that are influenced by technology in traditional and electronic media.

In the South Asian geopolitical context, Pakistan is a unique case study to explore the role of media in the policy-making process. With India, Afghanistan and China on its borders and being in the proximity of the Middle East, Pakistan's foreign policy is very sensitive to the domestic factors and external pressures. According to scholars, cross-border terrorism, Kashmir, regional security, and major power alliance formation have been the key factors that have influenced Pakistan's foreign policy, with the realignment of global alliances in the post-9/11 multipolar order adding further complexity to Pakistan's strategic posture. Here, local media functions as an important player in the interpretation, discussion and contestation of foreign policy messages.

Media freedom in Pakistan is dynamic and fragile, with political pressure and regulatory restrictions. The relation between the state and the media in Pakistan has been multifaceted, as in many cases it is cooperative while in other cases it may be conflictual, as suggested by Hussain (2015). Media can also be tools for the state to assist in promoting its own message, particularly during security crises, but can also be a space for public criticism and discussion, for asking questions about transparency and accountability in foreign policy decision-making. This duality creates a complex field of effects of the media, which is not ubiquitous but not strictly controllable either, as it is mediated through political interests, power and institutions.

Moreover, digital media has been a part of bringing change in the information environment of Pakistan. The new media dynamics facilitated by digital technologies have significantly shrunk the time frame between events and the public's response to them and, consequently, the time frame that the government can use to manage messages related to foreign policy (Seib 2008; Shehzad et al., 2024) while also raising pressing ethical and legal questions about the use of AI-driven tools in information management. New opportunities for public involvement, activism and framing of a story have emerged with social media such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. In the case of Pakistan, the digital media has enabled the citizens to be more involved in discussions around foreign policy issues and, in some cases, is used to give voice to alternative narratives to counter mainstream narratives, with research confirming that intensive social media engagement among younger audiences significantly shapes their perceptions and emotional responses to public issues. But a democracy also has its downsides; misinformation, sensationalism and a potential polarization of the public.

According to the perspective of agenda-setting theory, the Pakistani media has an important role in setting the agenda of foreign policy issues by prioritizing them. This theory is based on the idea that rather than telling audiences what to believe, the media provides them with an agenda or an agenda-setting effect, focusing on some issues rather than others. The media, through its own coverage of issues like Indo-Pak relations, Afghanistan policy or Pakistan's role in global alliances including its repositioning within shifting great power structures (Bukhari, Malik, & Mahmood, 2024), sets the agendas of what is important to the public and thus the policy makers who are attuned to public opinion. Entman (1993) says that the process of choice and emphasis of some aspects of an issue direct the way people interpret events, identify responsibility and make policy evaluations.

The cyclical connection between media and public opinion is also identified in the research. The media sets the agenda for foreign policy issues, which can affect public opinion, and public opinion can affect media coverage, especially in media competition (Kausar et al., 2022); economic uncertainties such as exchange rate volatility similarly shape the domestic political climate within which foreign policy narratives are received (Kausar, Rashid, & Saddique, 2022). This give-and-take is significant in the case of Pakistan as it is a semi-democratic environment to comprehend the modes in which foreign policy policies are legitimized or delegitimized. As long as the media and state narratives are the same, foreign policy agendas can gain lots of public support; if they are not, public skepticism can lead to pressuring the foreign policy makers to reconsider or provide their justification.

The propaganda model is also found relevant in literature with respect to understanding the operations of the media in Pakistan. Media outlets sometimes can be tools to carry out a foreign policy messaging from the state because of political pressures, economic dependency and ownership. This is especially true in times of crisis, during border wars, or when diplomacy is strained, when nationalistic framing is likely to prevail in the media. Patterns like this influence public opinion and help to consolidate particular foreign policy orientations, which are conducive to the state's interests.

Although there is extensive literature on the relationship between media and foreign policy on the international level, there is a huge lack of literature focusing on Pakistan's media foreign policy nexus. While the literature is vast on the study of media in Western democracies, authoritarian states, and global media institutions, the transitional democracies, such as Pakistan, are underexplored. Additionally, the

relationship between traditional media (television, newspapers) and digital media in forming foreign policy perceptions has been less explored in academic studies. This is especially pertinent in the context of Pakistan's fast-changing media landscape and the nation's geopolitical significance.

A recent scholarly debate has highlighted the importance of combining old theories of communication (e.g., framing, agenda-setting, public diplomacy) with the new, digital media landscapes. The media, which offers opportunities for open debate as well as limitations for political interests in Pakistan, is a fertile ground for re-examining these theoretical frames. To understand how media can influence national foreign policy narratives, an analysis of the interaction between journalists, policymakers, media owners and digital influencers of various actors can be helpful.

In parallel, attention needs to be paid to the institutional politics and its effect on the role of media in Pakistan, say scholars. Censorship, regulation pressure, polarization, media concentration and other factors affect the autonomy of the media and their reporting on foreign policy. Research shows that these restrictions have an impact not just on what is conveyed in the media but also on how the public comprehends and reacts to events abroad, particularly in a country where governance failures such as corruption further undermine institutional transparency (Ali, Islam, & Shabeer, 2024).

In this context, there is a growing body of literature that has demanded more empirical studies through the medium of interviews, policy analysis and the content analysis of media to understand the dynamics of the influence of media in Pakistan. Such studies can contribute to more nuanced understandings of how semi-democratic media work, and what it means for foreign policymaking.

When the literature is synthesized as a whole, it can be concluded that the media plays a significant role in foreign policy, which is able to influence perception, decision-making and the mediation of public diplomacy. Due to the special geopolitical location of Pakistan and the media environment in recent years, in-depth research on the role of media in foreign policy is not only timely but it is also very necessary. Although there are existing theories that serve as a good base, there is a need for more research to make these theories relevant in the context of Pakistan's political, cultural and technological realities.

Material and Methods

Research Design

This research is of a qualitative type in which the role of media in the foreign policy of Pakistan is explored. Qualitative research focuses on understanding complex phenomena within the context of their origins, and mostly uses interviews, observations, or document analysis to provide rich and detailed data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It gives flexibility in the design of the research, provides for the consideration of participants' lived experiences, and is an iterative process that involves the reworking and elaborating of the analysis as the research process unfolds. Some of the common qualitative approaches include thematic analysis, grounded theory, content analysis and narrative analysis, which all have their own distinct ways to analyze textual and contextual data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This thematic analysis was selected for this study due to its applicability to discovering patterns and themes within qualitative data. It offers a systematic, but flexible guideline to analyze semantic and latent contents, including both overt narrative and underlying meanings. This aligns with the study's goal, which was to explore the impact of local media portrayal on public opinion and policy making with a more detailed granularity, thus offering finer details about the impact of the media in Pakistan's foreign policy.

There are a number of advantages to thematic analysis. It can be used with a variety of theories and is able to systematically arrange massive qualitative data to improve transparency and credibility (Nowell et al., 2017). It encourages themes to come up inductively, which helps to mitigate the researcher's influence or bias, and makes it easier to interpret the influence of media without bias. However, thematic analysis is reliant on the researcher's interpretation of the data, and could potentially be subjective (Clarke & Braun, 2013). This study used triangulation, peer review and reflective practices as a way of checking the validity and reliability of the study to avoid this. Thematic analysis is methodologically rich and rigorously informative to explore the intricate intermingling of media discourses, public opinion and policymaking in Pakistan.

The qualitative method is based on semi-structured, open-ended interviews with key actors, including journalists, journalists' editors, policy makers, and foreign policy experts. This design was selected because it will enable the researcher to have an in-depth study of the participants' experience, opinion and insight. Qualitative research is different from quantitative research, which relies only on numbers and statistical analysis; in this type of research, the emphasis lies on the depth rather than the breadth, which is why the depth of thoughts, feelings and experiences is important for understanding the role of media in foreign policy.

Data Collection Methods

Primary Data Collection

Open-ended interviews were the main data collection method used; this was flexible and convenient for respondents to answer in their own time and give a detailed response. The open-ended nature allows for elaboration, and it allows participants to discuss the issues in depth and in their own words. This approach is especially appropriate for qualitative research to elicit rich and contextualized data to capture the nuances of the influence of media in shaping foreign policy.

Interviews give the chance to ask questions and seek further clarification of answers, as well as obtain additional information on specific aspects of the participants' experiences. Because of the sensitive nature of subjects like political influence and media influence, the email interviews also allowed respondents the privacy to reflect and respond to the questions, thus improving the quality of the interviews.

Selection of Participants

The selection of the participants was done through a purposive sampling from four key target groups, journalists, editors, policymakers and foreign policy experts. This variety guarantees that various points of view on media effects are included. Journalists and editors discussed how newspapers work, editorial decisions and difficulties in

reporting foreign policy, while policymakers and foreign policy experts discussed how the media affects public opinion and policy decisions.

Sampling Technique

The purposive sampling method was used to select the respondents who would provide rich and relevant data because of their expertise and experience. It is a non-probability technique that is consistent with the aims of qualitative research, which is to gain a deep understanding instead of generalization. Purposive sampling makes sure that the respondents selected are knowledgeable in order to give significant inputs about the study topic.

Criteria for Selecting Participants

Participants were selected based on the following criteria:

1. **Relevance:** Active involvement in media or foreign policy sectors in Pakistan.
2. **Experience:** Substantial professional experience and expertise in their respective fields.
3. **Diversity:** Representation across journalists, editors, policymakers, and foreign policy experts to ensure a diversity of opinion.

Number of Participants

A total of 20 respondents were chosen. This sample size was set using the principle of data saturation, that is, when no new insights could be gained from further interviews. This guaranteed that the data was rich, extensive and represented the views of the key stakeholders.

Data Collection Process

Interview Preparation

An interview guide was created to cover the role of media in creating foreign policies. There were open-ended questions relating to media framing, influence on policies, the digital media and challenges for journalists. Questions were formulated to be clear, relevant and flexible to enable the researcher to dig deeper where needed.

Conducting Interviews

To enable participants to reflect on the issues and to allow for their participation in the study due to their availability, email interviews were conducted. Participants were provided with the interview guide, instructions and asked for detailed responses. Follow-up emails were sent to elicit clarification and elaboration. Written responses were recorded directly, and it was ensured that they were accurate and complete.

Ethical Considerations

The study has been carried out in an ethical manner. An informed consent form was distributed to all participants to summarize the aim of the study, voluntary participation and level of confidentiality. The answers were anonymous, and the data

was solely for academic purposes. It was emphasized that the participants had the right to withdraw at any time.

Recording and Management of Data

The interviews were conducted via email, and therefore, written responses were automatically recorded. Responses were then compiled, anonymized and organized for thematic analysis. The data was then transcribed verbatim and put in a structured form and coded into categories based on the interview guide questions. This process was transparent, traceable and provided data integrity.

Data Analysis Techniques

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was selected as the main analysis technique as this would enable us to identify, analyze and report patterns in the qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It enables a fine-grained and nuanced description of the data (content level and implicatures).

Steps of Analysis

1. **Familiarization:** Repeated reading of responses to understand content and develop initial impressions.
2. **Coding:** Systematically finding relevant features throughout the data set. Codes were iteratively developed.
3. **Generating Themes:** Codes were clustered into larger themes that represented patterns in the data.
4. **Reviewing Themes:** Themes were reviewed at both the code and data levels for coherence and relevance.
5. **Defining and Naming Themes:** Each theme was clearly defined, named, and described to communicate its significance.

Coding Process

Using an open coding method, initial codes were generated without any preconceived coding categories, and focused coding was then performed to identify the recurring and significant patterns. Codes were coded and grouped into the categories of: Media Framing, Public Perception, and Policy Influence. Themes were further developed in an iterative manner and ensured the following: themes were distinct, clear and robust.

Trustworthiness and Reflexivity

Triangulation and peer review were adopted to enhance the credibility of the study, while iterative reflection on the researcher's bias was also done. Reflexivity involved making the researcher's work in the data interpretation transparent and reducing the subjectivity in the data. The steps ensured the validity, reliability and rigor of the analysis.

Limitations of the Study

Several limitations were identified:

1. Email interviews may have restricted response depth due to the lack of face-to-face interaction.
2. A sample size of 20 participants, though adequate for data saturation, might not fully represent the scope of views.
3. A sensitive topic may have led to self-censorship, affecting the authenticity of responses.

To overcome these restrictions, follow-up letters were sent, every effort was made to have relevant participants, and anonymity was stressed. However, in spite of those limitations, the study offers trustworthy findings about the impact of the media on foreign policy, with the caveat that future studies with larger sample sizes and mixed methods might yield greater generalizability.

Results and Discussion

Media Role

Journalist: A senior journalist said that the media plays an important role as an agenda setter. Extensive coverage of topics such as the use of U.S. drones compels government responses, he said, as they have to respond to the public outcry, and sensationalism and nationalistic rhetoric may mislead.

Editor: Framing effects highlighted, such as the framing of India-Pakistan relations as conflict, exacerbate tensions and shape public demand for assertive government action. The urge to engage in sensationalized narratives can be present in commercial pressures, impacting public opinion and diplomacy.

Policymaker: Observed that a lot of media coverage gives issues the priority they should have with the government. In the context of Afghan peace talks, the government took proactive actions in the media, which has a positive impact on stability in the region. Bad publicity, however, can make diplomacy more difficult.

Foreign Policy Expert: Media is the vessel that informs the public on foreign policy matters, including CPEC, as positive reporting not only helps to generate public support but also strengthens government policies.

Influence on Decision-Making

Journalist: Continuous coverage of Kashmir has forced firm government positions, such as the Pulwama attack coverage, which resulted in a more aggressive diplomatic stance.

Policymaker: Media limits scope for negotiation; media coverage depicting India as aggressor during 2019 escalation necessitated confrontation. The media is responsible for forming the public opinion towards Israel's non-recognition in Pakistan. **Editor:** Palestinian suffering is highlighted in negative coverage of Israel, furthering public opposition to normalization in the face of potential diplomatic advantages.

Foreign Policy Expert: Media ideologizes issues, policymakers don't want to be labeled as lacking public support.

Media Framing and Public Perception

Journalist: Coverage of conflict in the Indian media on Pakistan triggers emotional reaction, aggressive policies.

Editor: Human-interest stories on Kashmir create empathy and moral outrage, garnering public support.

Policymaker: Urgent framing of humanitarian crises limits diplomacy options, for example, coverage of the crisis in 2019 led to an uptick in readiness.
Expert: Morality framing on Israel-Palestine curtails diplomatic flexibility, affects public opinion against normalization.

Challenges Faced by Journalists

Journalist: Threats and violence, e.g. murder of Arshad Sharif, lead to self-censorship.

Editor: Independence of the editor is restricted by pressure from intelligence agencies.

Policymaker: Without responsible reporting, there would be harm, and sensationalism would harm diplomacy.

Expert: Digital media offers independence but is vulnerable to censorship and internet suspensions.

Impact of Digital Media

Journalist: Social media is able to quickly spread images from war zones, which can shape perceptions and push governments into action (e.g., Gaza conflict).

Editor: Digital content on Kashmir fuels people's sentiments that restrict the normalization with India.

Policymaker: Digital media has the power to mobilize negative feelings but also positive interactions, creating grassroots diplomacy.

Expert: Digital platforms are providing a democratic access to information and are giving influence to the foreign policy agenda by non-state actors (e.g., Palestinian rights campaigns).

Engagement with Policymakers

Journalist: The independence of the media enables objective reporting, which helps shape public opinion and holds policymakers accountable.

Editor: Free elections make the Government more willing to communicate openly with the media.

Policymaker: If the public can see you're engaged, it creates more trust and makes policies more effective.

Expert: Free media is important for dialogue, and structural reforms are needed to ensure it.

Media Freedom and Regulation

Journalist: Censorship, threats and self-censorship are all factors that affect freedom of the media.

Editor: Intelligence agencies distort reporting; content is altered under pressure.

Policymaker: Regulation can sometimes be needed to protect national security (e.g., Cypher case).

Expert: Commercial pressures and state control curtail critical foreign policy reporting.

Personal Experiences and Insights

Journalist: The government could not be complacent in reacting to the Uri attack coverage.

Editor: Civilian casualties from drone strikes found coverage in the editor, impacting the diplomatic advocacy at the UN.

Policymaker: Pulwama coverage in 2019 further fueled public clamor for robust response measures.

Expert: Gaza coverage helped stir public opinion, leading to official condemnation, although it had diplomatic implications.

Comparative Insights

Journalist: Unlike Pakistan, the U.S. media is independent, and it can criticize government policy freely.

Editor: European media enjoys freedom of the press; Pakistani media is hampered by intelligence agencies.

Policymaker: China/Russia-type countries use media as the instrument for propaganda, Pakistan is somewhere in between.

Expert: Indian media, too, has been fueling the frenzy in the minds of the people, but Indian media also gives investigative journalism more than Pakistani media.

Concluding Thoughts

Journalist: It is necessary to have more freedom of the media, safety and an investigative culture.

Editor: Editorial independence, professional ethics, and public debate improve reporting quality.

Policymaker: Responsible reporting is a balance of freedom and national security, engagement builds trust.

Expert: How to prevent misinformation and use digital media to promote awareness.

Conclusion

The research indicates that the media is becoming more and more influential in agenda setting and framing to influence public opinion and government action. Media attention on issues such as the Kashmir strife, the Israel-Palestine question, cross-border attacks and drone strikes by the United States has compelled the government to adopt firm foreign policy positions, which are applauded by the people.

Journalists in Pakistan face serious threats, are kidnapped, have been subjected to pressure by intelligence agencies and commercial interests and are self-censoring themselves and limiting critical coverage of the situation. Regulatory restrictions and censorship also restrict media freedom, including the range of points of view on foreign policy. With the advent of digital media, the impact of media has been further exacerbated, as they can rapidly disseminate information and polarize the public, but on the other hand, digital media has its own set of problems, such as misinformation.

It is critical that there be a more effective communication line between the policy makers and the media in order to ensure transparency, awareness and accountability in foreign policy, especially as underlying structural economic vulnerabilities, including trade imbalances, continue to constrain Pakistan's diplomatic leverage (Saeed & Shabeer, 2023). Comparative lessons indicate that whilst the media in Pakistan is operating in a constrained environment, there are lessons that can be learnt from countries where the media is more independent. In conclusion, the use of media in Pakistan is complex and multifaceted; it can directly pressurize foreign policy, but it is equally possible that the media can frame the narrative, which will affect foreign policy in a subtle manner. Media freedom, investigative journalism, balance in regulating the media and the use of digital platforms is essential to a better and more effective foreign policy-making process.

Recommendations

Considering the findings, the following recommendations are suggested for the improvement of the role of media in foreign policymaking in Pakistan:

1. **Strengthened Legal Protections:** Ensure strong laws to prevent threats, violence and coercion against journalists from both state and non-state actors. Fearless and critical reporting will be encouraged by legal protection.
2. **Promote Editorial Independence:** Promote Editorial Independence: Media outlets should not be under undue pressure from intelligence agencies, establishment or commercial establishments, and should instead be guided by ethical leadership principles that responsibly integrate emerging technologies into editorial practices. Decision-making for editorial matters should be based on public interest and professional ethics with clear guidelines.
3. **Foster Investigative Journalism:** Provide training, support and legal protection for investigative journalism. Partnering with foreign journalism networks can add depth and credibility to foreign policy reporting.

4. **Balance Regulation and Freedom:** Establish a regulation system that will not restrict the freedom of speech beyond what is necessary for national security. Encourage fact-checking, ethics and responsible reporting to safeguard media freedom and protect sensitive information.
5. **Leverage Digital Media:** Create Digital Media to amplify the public discussion and promote engagement. Encourage trustworthy content, fight against fake news and conduct training related to digital literacy for journalists and the public.
6. **Enhance Transparency:** There is a need for policymakers to communicate with the media in advance, using press briefings, detailed statements and electronic communication. Transparency contributes to building trust and awareness among the public of foreign policy decisions.
7. **Encourage Public Feedback:** conduct public consultations, surveys, town hall meetings, and monitor media to make foreign policy more responsive to public input. Feedback Loops make people more accountable and more included.
8. **Learn from Comparative Insights:** Identify best practices from countries that have freer and more independent media to aid in enhancing the media environment in Pakistan. Introduce methods that allow for media independence and media-based investigation and critical thinking in the local context.

To conclude, the suggestions above provide Pakistan the chance to create a media setting that is informative and plays a proactive role in positively influencing foreign policy. Foreign policy will be more effective, responsive and accountable with more robust legal safeguards, more investigative journalism, greater independence, digital media presence, transparency and public involvement.

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